

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 04431 01 OF 02 061910Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 MCT-01 /081 W
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P R 061810Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7778
INFO INFO RUESUA/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 362
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 4431

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS PINT BR
SUBJECT: POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY INCREASES

REFS A. BRASILIA 4063 B. SAO PAULO 1613 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: WITH THE IMPORTANT EXCEPTION OF SAO PAULO (REFTEL B) AND
CEARA, ARENA STATE NOMINATING CONVENTIONS JUNE 4 CONFIRMED THE GOB'S
SELECTIONS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE INDIRECT GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS
SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 1 (BRASILIA 3922). THE ONLY OTHER REPORTED
UPSET OF A GOB-SELECTED CANDIDATE OCCURRED IN THE NEW STATE OF
MATTO GROSSO DO SUL, WHERE THE REGIME'S CANDIDATE FOR INDIRECTLY
ELECTED ("BIONIC") SENATOR WAS REJECTED. INITIAL GOB REACTION
HAS CONSISTED OF EMPHATIC ASSURANCES THAT ALL STATE RESULTS WILL BE
RESPECTED, BUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION HAS BECOME MORE FLUID.
THIS MESSAGE ALSO REVIEWS DEVELOPMENTS OF THE WEEK THAT PRECEDED
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PAGE 02 BRASIL 04431 01 OF 02 061910Z

THE SSTATE CONVENTIONS, INCLUDING A JOINT APPEAL TO THE MDB
BY DISSIDENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MAGALHAES PINTO AND PROSPECTIVE
CANDIDATE EULER BENTES MONTEIRO, AND AN EXTRAORDINARY MDB NATIONAL
CONVENTION THAT AUTHORIZED THE PARTY TO PARTICIPATE IN INDIRECT
ELECTIONS AT ALL LEVELS, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENCY. END SUMMARY.

2. AS ARENA'S STATE CONVENTIONS APPROACHED LAST WEEKEND, THE

REGIME'S ONLY APPARENT CONCERN FOCUSED ON ITS NOMINEES IN MINAS GERAIS, PARAIBA AND, OF COURSE, SAO PAULO. (IN A LAST MINUTE DEVELOPMENT, HOWEVER, THE CEARA STATE CONVENTION WAS POSTPONED BECAUSE OF DISAGREEMENT AMONG ARENA FACTIONS.) THE MINAS GERAIS CONVENTION OVERWHELMINGLY ENDORSED GEISEL FAVORITE (AND ARENA PRESIDENT) FRANCELINO PEREIRA, AND GEISEL'S NOMINEE WAS CONFIRMED IN PARAIBA, ALTHOUGH BY A SLIM MARGIN OF 28 VOTES, THE SAME MARGIN BY WHICH LAUDO NATEL LOST IN SAO PAULO (REFTEL B). THE MDB CONCURRENTLY

HELD ITS STATE NOMINATING CONVENTION IN RIO DE JANEIRO, THE ONLY STATE IN WHICH IT HAS THE POLITICAL CONTROL NECESSARY TO ENSURE ELECTION OF ITS CANDIDATE (CONGEN RIO IS REPORTING SEPARATELY ON THIS).

3. GOB SPOKESMEN JUNE 5 WERE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR PUBLIC ASSURANCES THAT ALL CONVENTION RESULTS, AND PARTICULARLY MALUF'S UPSET VICTORY IN SA PAULO, WOULD BE RESPECTED. PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY LUDWIG STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT MALUF WOULD TAKE OFFICE IF ELECTED IN SEPTEMBER. LUDWIG ACKNOWLEDGE THAT FIGUEIREDO WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE SAO PAULO RESULTS, BUT ADDED THAT "THIS IS PART OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ."

4. LAST WEEK EGAN WITH FIGUEIREDO'S FORMAL RETIREMENT FROM THE ARMY ON MAY 29 AFTER A 43-YEAR CAREER (HE IS EXPECTED TO LEAVE HIS JOB AS SNI CHIEF AND MOVE OUT OF PLANALTO PALACE TO CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS IN A DOWNTOWN HOTEL ABOUT JUNE 15). HIS RETIREMENT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 04431 01 OF 02 061910Z

CEREMONY WAS MARKED BY CONTROVERSY, HOWEVER, ARMY MINISTER BETHLEM, IN HIS FAREWELL SPEECH TO FIGUEIREDO, SAID THAT HIS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMY. THIS STATEMENT HAS SINCE BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED BY THE PRESS, ELEMENTS OF THE MDB AND OTHER CIVILIAN SECTORS AND, REPORTEDLY, BY GENERAL HUGO ABREU IN A PRIVATE LETTER TO BETHLEM. CRITICS WERE UNANIMOUS IN CHIDING BETHLEM FOR HAVING CROSSED THE THIN BUT CAREFULLY RESPECTED LINE THAT IN THE ARMY'S VIEW SEPARATES IT FROM DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS""BETHLEM WAS CHARGED, IN EFFECT, WITH COMMITTING IT TO A PARTISAN (ARENA) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. CONTINUING THE GOB'S APPARENT DECISION TO WRAP THE ARMED FORCES AROUND FIGUEIREDO'S CANDIDACY, HOWEVER, BOTH THE AIR MINISTER AND THE CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF ISSUED "PERSONAL" STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR

FIGUEIREDO ON MAY 30 AND 31, RESPECTIVELY.

5. CONCURRENT WITH THE ABOVE, THE PRESS MAY 30 CARRIED THE TEXT OF A BRIEF STATEMENT ISSUED JOINTLY BY EULER BENTES AND MAGALHAES PINTO. THEY HAD MET IN RIO SECRETLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE, REPORTEDLY WITH GENERAL ABREU AND MAGALHAES' VICE-PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING-MATE, SEVERO GOMES, AS PRINCIPAL INTERMEDIARIES. THE JOINT STATEMENT ENDORSED THE EMBRYONIC "NATIONAL FRONT FOR

REDEMOCRATIZATION" (REFTEL A), FIRST CALLED FOR BY MAGALHAES IN

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 04431 02 OF 02 061940Z
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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 4431

RECIFE
ON MAY 12, REAFFIRMED THE IDEALS OF THE MARCH 1964 REVOLUTION,
PLEDGED EFFORTS TOWARD AN IMMEDIATE RETURN TO A STATE OF LAW AND
DIRECT ELECTIONS, AND URGED THE MDB TO GIVE ITS "INDISPENSABLE
SUPPORT TO THE FORMATION OF THE FRONT". THE MDB RESPONDED WITH,
AND HAS MAINTAINED, AN ATTITUDE OF CONSIDERABLE CAUTION--PARTY
PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES STRESSING THAT THE MDB'S POSITION ON
SUCH A MATTER WOULD HAVE TO BE DECIDED UPON BY THE PARTY AS A
WHOLE ASSEMBLED IN CONVENTION.

6. MEANWHILE, THE MDB HELD AN EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL CONVENTION ON
MAY 31, OSTENSIBLY FOR THE NARROW PURPOSE OF DECIDING WHETHER THE
PARTY WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE INDIRECT ELECTION FOR GOVERNOR
IN RIO DE JANEIRO. GOING BEYOND ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE, THE PARTY
AUTHORIZED ALL OF ITS STATE DELEGATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN INDIRECT
ELECTIONS AS THEY SAW FIT, AND, EXPANDING ITS OPTIONS ON THE
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PAGE 02 BRASIL 04431 02 OF 02 061940Z

NATIONAL SCENE, VOTED TO "ADMIT THE POSSIBILITY OF PARTICIPATING IN THE (INDIRECT) PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION" AS WELL. IT ALSO ADOPTED A TEN-POINT "MINIMUM PROGRAM" TO WHICH ALL CANDIDATES SEEKING MDB SUPPORT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE IN ADDITION TO THE PARTY PLATFORM. THE TEN POINTS ESSENTIALLY EMBODIED ALL OF THE DEMANDS FOR RESTITUTION OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES BEING ARTICULATED BY THE VARIOUS CIVILIAN SECTORS INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT PUBLIC POLITICAL DEBATE.

7. ARMED WITH THE AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN INDIRECT ELECTIONS, THE MDB PROCEEDED TO ENDORSE FORMER GOVERNOR CHAGAS FREITAS FOR THE GOVERNORSHIP OF RIO IN MUCH THE SAME STEAMROLLER WAY THAT ARENA CONFIRMED ITS NOMINEES IN MOST OTHER STATES. THE MDB'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE INDIRECT ELECTION PROVISIONS OF GEISEL'S APRIL 1977 "PACKAGE" OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS WAS HARSHLY CRITICIZED BY MOST OF THE PRESS. CRITICAL ADJECTIVES RANGED FROM "EXPEDIENT" TO "HYPOCRITICAL", WITH SOME PAPERS GOING SO FAR AS TO STATE THAT THE PARTY HAD PROVEN THAT IT TRULY ADHERES TO PRINCIPLE--WHENEVER PERSONAL AMBITION DOES NOT GET IN THE WAY (AN OVERLY HARSH JUDGMENT, IN OUR VIEW).

8. COMMENT: IF MALUF IN FACT BECOMES GOVERNOR-ELECT ON SEPTEMBER 1, THE SAO PAULO UPSET COULD HAVE IMPORTANT EFFECT ON FIGUEIREDO'S FUTURE POLITICAL SUPPORT FROM THE STATE AND, BY EXTENSION, ELSEWHERE AS WELL IN THE INDIRECT OCTOBER 15 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. PERHAPS EVEN MORE POLITICALLY DAMAGING TO FIGUEIREDO HOWEVER, AS WELL AS TO GEISEL, WOULD BE A GOB EFFORT---SUCCESSFUL OR OTHERWISE

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TO CRUSH MALUF BEFORE THE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION ALONG LINES SUGGESTED IN PARA 5 OF REFTEL B. THIS DOES NOT SEEM PRESENTLY INDICATED, HOWEVER.

MORE IMMEDIATELY AFFECTED BY THE MALUF UPSET IS FIGUEIREDO'S
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PAGE 03 BRASIL 04431 02 OF 02 061940Z

PRESTIGE, A GOOD DEAL OF WHICH HE HAD COMMITTED TO LAUDO NATEL--AND WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO HAVE SUFFERED AN AT LEAST TEMPORARILY SERIOUS SETBACK WITHIN BOTH ARENA AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE MILITARY. MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO GENERAL BELIEF, IN THE PROCESS OF SELECTING NATEL LAST APRIL FIGUEIREDO LITERALLY STOOD UP TO THE USUALLY IMMOVABLE GEISEL, WHO FAVORED ANOTHER CANDIDATE, BUT THE PRESIDENT GAVE WAY BECAUSE OF FIGUEIREDO'S STRONG STAND. IF TRUE, THE LOSS OF HIS FIRST IMPORTANT POLITICAL TEST COULD ALSO HAVE AFFECTED FIGUEIREDO'S FUTURE RELATIONS WITH GEISEL.

THE MOST IMMEDIATE VISIBLE EFFECT OF THE MALUF UPSET WILL PROBABLY BE THE IMPETUS IT WILL PROVIDE TO THE SO FAR AMORPHOUS EFFORTS TO GIVE SOME SUBSTANCE TO THE EMBRYONIC "FRONT FOR REDEMOCRATIZATION",

E.G., BY ENCOURAGING DISSIDENT ARENA AND MILITARY ELEMENTS TO BECOME MORE ACTIVELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE MOVEMENT. THERE ARE REPORTS OF PLANS TO "LAUNCH" THE FRONT PUBLICLY AND WITH SOME FANFARE IN SAO PAULO WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK OR TWO. KEY TO WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE FRONT, HOWEVER, IS WHETHER OR NOT THE MDB PARTICIPATES IN ITS AS A POLITICAL PARTY. WITHOUT THE FORMAL ACCESSION OF THE MDB, THE FRONT STANDS LITTLE OR NO CHANCE OF ACQUIRING EITHER THE LEGAL STATUS OR POLITICAL STATURE THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO MAKE IT A VIABLE, ELECTORALLY COMPETITIVE ORGANISM. THIS WAS CLEARLY RECOGNIZED IN THE BENTES-MAGALHAES STATEMENT ABOVE, IN ITS POINTED REFERENCE TO THE NEED FOR THE MDB'S "INDISPENSABLE SUPPORT" FOR THE FORMATION OF THE FRONT. THE MDB IS NOW GIVING THIS QUESTION URGENT CONSIDERATION.

REGARDLESS OF THE FUTURE OF THE FRONT, WHICH AT THE LEAST COULD SERVE TO AGGREGATE DIVERSE INTERESTS INTO A MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH PRESSURES FROM CIVILIAN AND SOME MILITARY SECTORS COULD BE EXERTED ON THE GOVERNMENT IN MORE CHANNELED AND ORGANIZED FASHION THEN HERETOFORE, THE RESULT OF THE SAO PAULO CONVENTION HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO HASTEN THE PACE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND TO INCREASE THE FLUIDITY OF A SITUATION OF INCREASINGLY UNCERTAIN OUTCOME.
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